

Let Me Go, Mr. Hill! by Shallow South by Shallow South

Chapter 1

Slap!

A resounding slap landed on Catherine Jones' face.

"You've really let me down. Your sister has had a rough time out there for more than 20 years, and here you are planning to snatch the man from her. That's very shameless of you!"

Covering the part of her face that was aching, Catherine looked at her mother incredulously. "Mom, Ethan is my boyfriend. How can you guys be so unreasonable?"

Catherine had just come home after a business trip, only to see her long-lost elder sister, Rebecca Jones, sitting with her boyfriend, Ethan Lowe, on the couch. Her sister, who returned not long ago, was holding Ethan's arm and seemed intimate with him.

Seated on the other side of the couch were both Rebecca and Ethan's parents who were having a pleasant chat with each other.

In fact, Ethan was Catherine's childhood sweetheart!

She could not help but come up to Rebecca to question her. However, she ended up being slapped by her mother in the face right there and then!

"Mom, please stop hitting Cathy." With an anxious look, Rebecca said, "It's my fault. I shouldn't have come back..."

Ethan quickly held her shoulders. "No, Rebecca. It's my fault. I've always treated Catherine as my sister, which is probably why she misunderstood my feelings for her."

Something seemed to have exploded in Catherine's head. The pain was so terrible that she could barely breathe.

Sister?

Why would he secretly promise her a future together if he only treated her as his sister?

Why would he always hug her tightly if he only treated her as his sister?

"Shut up!" She found those words unbearable and they were filling her with disgust.

"You're the one who should shut your mouth. Is this how you're supposed to speak to your sister?" Mrs. Jones told her off sulkily. "Can't you just be tolerant of Rebecca, considering that she has gone through 20 years of hardships?"

Shocked, Catherine was slightly slack-jawed.

There had to be some limit on tolerance anyway. Why should she give up her love? She was not a saint either.

At that point, Mr. Jones stood up and told her off glumly as well. "Are you done? Ethan isn't into you either. We still need to discuss Rebecca's engagement party now. Get lost. You're such an eyesore here."

Catherine trembled and glanced at Ethan who was indifferent toward her. She then glanced at Rebecca who was clinging to him.

All of a sudden, she felt like an object of ridicule.

These people were the ones she cared most about, yet every one of them was taking Rebecca's side at that moment.

Tears were seen streaming down her face.

After wiping away the tears, Catherine turned around and left with her suitcase without looking back.

She sped through the journey once she got into the Maserati.

Not knowing where to go, she stopped and called her best friend, Freya Lynch.

"Come and have a drink or two."

Her voice sounded hoarse amid her sobs. Freya immediately agreed. "Sure. I'll be there in a moment."

...

By the time Freya rushed over to S1897 pub, Catherine had already finished one whole bottle of red wine by herself.

"You came at the right time. Let's have a drink together. I've ordered a lot. You're not allowed to go home until you finish the drinks."

Catherine tossed Freya a bottle of beer.

“What’s wrong?” It was very rare for Freya to find Catherina behaving in such a manner. She sympathized deeply with Catherine. “Where’s Ethan? Is he ignoring you?”

At the mention of Ethan’s name, Catherine felt as if a knife was scraping her heart.

“He’s ditched me, and he’s going to get engaged to Rebecca.”

Freya gaped. “What kind of a campy plot is this?”

Catherine briefly told her what happened that evening.

Freya felt a sense of incredulity. Ethan and Catherine were childhood sweethearts who had established a romantic relationship since high school.

Throughout these years, however, Catherine studied abroad while Ethan was busy with work. It explained why they had yet to get engaged.

Both their parents were under no illusions about it. They also gave their blessings to the couple.

Every insider knew that the couple would get married sooner or later.

Now, it turned out that Ethan had gotten together with Rebecca, which would then make Catherine a laughing stock.

“This is absurd. You and Rebecca should be equally important to your parents. Are your dad and mom out of their minds?”

Catherine clutched the wine bottle. "They probably feel that Rebecca has suffered too much out there. Now that she's back, they just want to give her the best."

Freya was in a state of disbelief. "But you're their daughter too!"

Catherine forced out a smile.

"Hah. Now that Rebecca has returned, all they care about is Rebecca.

"Since young, they're the ones who wanted to marry me off to Ethan. Now that I'm treating the matter seriously, they're calling me immature.

"Also, Ethan promised to be with me forever, yet he has changed his mind just like that. I hate him..."

Toward the end of her sentence, Catherine began to choke. Holding the bottle, she took a few gulps of wine and tasted her tears in her mouth as well. At that moment, she started feeling a little dizzy.

"Don't drink too much. You have a poor stomach. You'll feel uncomfortable if you drink too much."

Freya grabbed Catherine's bottle to divert her attention from it. After that, she glanced around the pub.

Never did she expect to see a familiar figure.

"Hey, look there!"

Freya gave Catherine a push and pointed to the man who was sitting at a corner.

Despite the dim glow at that corner, the man was faintly visible. He wore a suit which was inappropriate for the occasion.

The man had his eyes closed and was leaning against the couch, giving off an aura of brilliance. When the rotating spotlight shone on him from time to time, he looked so attractive that his face was just like the perfect side profile one often saw in comic books.

After a glimpse, Catherine averted her eyes from him. "No matter how attractive he is, I'm in no mood to enjoy anything that's pleasant to the eye right now."

"I'm trying to tell you that the man is Ethan's uncle."

Catherine was momentarily stunned. "Are you sure?"

Ethan previously mentioned that he had a mysterious uncle. However, his uncle managed a company in a foreign country, so she had never seen him.

A few days ago, she heard that his uncle had returned.

"Yeah, I'm very sure. My brother told me when we attended a cocktail party the other day. I heard he's not very old and he's clever with tricks. Even Zachary is at his mercy."

Zachary Lowe was Ethan's father.

Catherine's eyes glowed. She had an idea crossing her mind at that instant.

"Well... What do you think will happen if I marry his uncle?"

“Pff...” Shocked, Freya spat out the wine from her mouth. “Say that again.”

Catherine gazed intently at the tall, handsome figure. “Since I can’t become the Lowe family’s daughter-in-law, I shall be Ethan’s aunt to fill the shameless couple with disgust!”

Chapter 2

Freya was momentarily dumbfounded. She then showed Catherine a thumbs up right away.

“Great! What a great idea! I’m on your side! His uncle’s appearance is perfect. Even Ethan isn’t as good-looking as his uncle. His uncle’s wealth and power are also comparable to that of the Lowe family.”

“I need to remind you that you have to find an excellent match or your position in Jones Corporation will be inferior to Rebecca’s. So I think his uncle is suitable for you!”

Catherine was dazed for a second. Freya might be straightforward, but what she said was true.

If Rebecca had the Lowe family backing her, Catherine’s position in Jones Corporation would be at stake.

“Okay, I’m going to capture his heart right now!”

Catherine snatched Freya’s purse on impulse to search for lipstick and foundation.

Her pure face soon looked radiant.

Freya blinked. “Uh, are you sure you can deal with him?”

“He’s just a man, isn’t he? Hah!”

Catherine swept her hair over one shoulder, then held a half-full glass of red wine. With a tipsy and pretty look, she walked toward the man proudly.

The closer she got to the man, the clearer his exquisitely handsome face became. His clean, somber eyebrows and exquisite nose bridge were nothing short of attractive.

“Hi. Sorry to bother you, but could you tell me the time now?”

Catherine tapped her finger on his shoulder twice.

When the man opened his drunken eyes under the dim light, the word ‘devil’ flashed through Catherine’s mind.

Her brain shorted out for a few seconds. After regaining her senses, she wore a pretty smile and said, “I think our first encounter here is the start of our happiness.”

With furrowed brows, Shaun Hill coldly said, “I’m not a doctor. I don’t provide treatment.”

“What?”

“You’re insane, aren’t you?” The man’s sexy lips moved slightly. Nevertheless, the words that came out of his mouth were extremely mean.

“...”

At that moment, Catherine felt like getting a mirror to take a hard look at herself.

Was she not pretty? Really?

Anyway, it was impossible to grasp men's thoughts. Otherwise, Ethan would not have betrayed her.

"I'm actually ill. I'm not insane but lovesick."

Catherine swiftly calmed down and gave an embarrassed smile. "I started getting lovesick when I met you for the first time."

When Shaun raised his eyebrows a little, Catherine immediately seized the opportunity to say, "They say one can't help feeling happy when they meet the love of their life, and this is exactly how I'm feeling at the moment."

"Alright, I got it. You may leave now."

The man averted his eyes away from her in a careless manner. From his expression, it seemed that he was unbothered by her.

Catherine was deeply hurt. She was a great beauty and the pride of Sydney. At this moment, she had the urge to turn away. The moment she pictured herself becoming Ethan's aunt, however, she summoned up the courage to talk to him again.

"Pretty boy, could I add your contact to my WhatsApp?"

Lying on the couch lazily with his eyes closed, Shaun looked delicately elegant.

“Pretty boy, could you give me your number?”

“Pretty boy, could you tell me your name?”

“Pretty boy, you look so charming with your eyes closed that women just find it irresistible.”

“...”

Annoyed by the completely shameless owner of the voice, Shaun opened his eyes and asked in annoyance, “What on earth do you want?”

“I want to marry you,” Catherine blurted out.

The corners of Shaun’s mouth twitched.

While smiling, Catherine added, “If I’m really not planning on marrying you, what I’ve just said would show that I’m a scumbag. Actually, I’m quite a catch. I’m 22 this year, and I graduated from the University of New South Wales. I’m a competent woman who does well both at home and in public. Moreover, I’ll pamper my husband. I’m capable of earning money too. I’m healthy and don’t have any bad habits. Above all, I’m not a fickle lover.”

Shaun was speechless.

He rubbed his eyes, then gazed at her strangely.

Catherine raised her hand. “I can swear that from now on, I’ll only treat you well and promise you everything I’ve said...”

“Shut up.”

Shaun was so fed up with her that he stood up.

Only when Catherine looked up did she realize that he was really tall. He was close to six feet and two inches, and furthermore, he had such a wonderful figure.

“If you want to marry me, bring your birth certificate and meet me at the registry office at 10:00 a.m. tomorrow.”

The man stared down at her with one hand in his pocket.

Catherine was dumbfounded. She then stammered, “Are you lying to me?”

“You can give it a go.” Upon looking away, Shaun turned around and swaggered to leave.

Chapter 3

The plot twist happened so quickly that Catherine suspected she had drunk too much.

Such a thought remained until Freya came to tap her on the shoulder. She said sympathetically, “Don’t get too upset. It’s not easy to capture the heart of a tall, wealthy, and handsome man. Keep it up—”

“No. He told me to meet him at the entrance of the registry office tomorrow at 10 a.m.,” Catherine replied with a dazed look.

“...”

Freya remained uncannily quiet for a moment before she burst out laughing. "Congratulations on becoming Ethan's aunt!"

Catherine asked, "You believe it?"

Freya forcefully pinched Catherine's soft face.

"Why not? Please. With your naturally pure look, you can easily beat those young ladies in the entertainment industry. If I were a man, I'd fall in love with you at first sight. Let's go and have a drink to celebrate your marriage."

Catherine seriously wondered how much Freya had drunk while she was away.

However, Catherine began to have a hangover after drinking alcohol just now. She felt her head becoming heavy.

A Bentley Mulsanne slowly moved toward the pub entrance.

The valet opened the car door, and Shaun subsequently went to the backseat. He undid the two buttons of his shirt over his front chest while leaning against the leather seat lazily. "Didn't I tell you to keep it low-key?"

Hadley Young politely replied, "This is actually the cheapest car in the Hill family's house."

Shaun frowned a little. "Who else knows that I'm in Melbourne?"

"No one except Old Madam."

Shaun's brows relaxed. By the look of things, the woman's appearance just now was sheer coincidence. "Find out who this person is. I want to know her information before dawn."

...

The morning sun shone through the curtains.

Catherine, who was deep asleep, was woken by the noise outside.

Just as she opened her eyes, she saw Ethan opening the door and striding into her room.

Freya, who followed him into the room, roared. "This is my house! You're basically invading my home!"

"Sure enough, you're here." Ethan stared keenly at Catherine who had bloodshot eyes and slightly messy hair.

Catherine became wide awake at that moment, her eyes expressing dejection.

"The two of you should have a good chat. It hasn't been easy being together for so many years." After some thought, Freya turned around and left, closing the door behind her.

The room was silent. Sitting on the edge of the bed, Ethan stretched out his hand to touch her hair.

With a scornful look, Catherine dodged away from his hand. "Does Rebecca know that you're here?"

Ethan's handsome face froze, then he clenched his fist. "Cathy, you're probably unaware that the Jones family has decided to give Rebecca 80 percent of the company's shares."

Catherine was so shocked that her lips turned pale. "This is impossible."

"It's true. Your dad said it himself."

Catherine seemed to have grasped everything within minutes.

She lifted her head and looked at her childhood sweetheart whom she loved back then. Tears began to gush from her eyes. "So that's why you abandoned me and chose Rebecca, right?"

Ethan gripped her hands. "This is just temporary. I've just gotten engaged to Rebecca, but I'll leave our wedding on the back-burner. As you know, my dad has an illegitimate son. If I don't do this, I wouldn't even be able to compete. Cathy, I just want to provide you with a good life."

"Bullsh*t."

Catherine snatched her hand out of his grasp and threw insults at him. "You're only 25 years old. Even if you don't get any inheritance from your family, can't you just start your own business?"

"You're too naive."

Ethan stood up slowly, hiding the emotions in his eyes. He said helplessly, "It's not in our power to choose certain things due to our background."

Catherine sneered without uttering a word as she found it unreasonable.

Amid the silence, Ethan sighed softly. "Give me three years, Cathy. You're still young. You can afford to wait."

Catherine nearly went mad.

How dare he say such things in a self-righteous manner when he only wanted to make her keep her youth for him?

"You're treating me as a fool, aren't you? You've chosen to be engaged to Rebecca for the sake of your career. Who knows whether you'll marry her three years later? Please get out of my face. I don't want to see you anymore!"

"Time will show my love for you. You can be upset with me, but don't go out and drown your sorrows with alcohol. It's not good for your health."

Since Catherine was not going along with what he said, he merely advised her before he turned around and left.

Upon hearing the door shut, Catherine flung a pillow to the wall with reddened eyes and spent a few seconds sitting still. After that, she frantically put on her shirt and dashed out.

"He's left. What's the point of going after him?" Freya quickly stopped her.

Catherine took a deep breath, then gnashed her teeth. "I agreed to meet him at 10 a.m. to get married."

Freya said, "You actually believe him?"

"Didn't you say you believed him last night?"

Freya embarrassedly replied, "That's because I drank too much."

"What if he's serious about it?" Catherine pushed her away and ran out.

Chapter 4

Catherine took a taxi directly to the Jones family's house. At that time, Mr. Jones had already gone to work.

She rushed upstairs to take her birth certificate. Just as she walked to the living room, she saw Rebecca coming out of the study with a large pile of documents.

Rebecca looked pure with a black bob and a pristine face.

"You're finally back, Sis. I was still worried about what happened yesterday." A guilty look spread across Rebecca's face. "It's just that Ethan is really not into you. You can't force someone to love you."

Catherine shot her a cold gaze. "Enough is enough. You can stop acting since there's no one else here. I underestimated you before this."

"Don't treat me this way." Rebecca bit her lip, her tears streaming down her face. "I'll just yield to your demands in the future, okay? I won't get involved in matters related to the company. I'll pass you these documents."

As she was speaking, she shoved the documents into Catherine's hands.

Catherine found it strange and subconsciously extended her hands to push the documents away. As a result, all the documents dropped to the floor.

“What are you guys doing?”

Suddenly, Sally Lennon walked down the stairs and caught sight of Rebecca’s teary face as well as the scattered documents.

“Aren’t these the company’s documents that your dad asked you to go through?”

“Don’t be mad at her, Mom. It’s my fault.” With a pale face, Rebecca hurriedly explained, “Cathy asked me to stop getting involved in the company’s matters and hand these documents to her. I was planning on giving her the documents, but she’s probably unhappy about the issue with Ethan, so—”

“You’re bullsh*tting—”

“Shut up!” Sally glared at Catherine. “Who gave you the right to have a hand in the company’s matters? It’s your dad and me who asked Rebecca to go through the documents. Rebecca will officially become the manager of the company next week. You’d better behave yourself.”

Catherine was dumbfounded. “Speaking of education and experience, I’m more qualified than her. Despite joining the company one year earlier than her, I’m not even a manager yet. What gives her the right to jump to a managerial position just like that?”

“Mom, I’d better not become a manager. I don’t want to ruin my relationship with Cathy,” Rebecca immediately said while sobbing.

Sally’s heart ached very badly. “Look how much Rebecca cares about your sisterhood. What about you? You’re narrow-minded and calculating. You’re not even qualified to be a manager. No wonder Ethan would choose Rebecca instead.”

Her mother’s cruel words felt as if she was getting whipped.

Both Rebecca and Catherine were her daughters. However, Sally was so biased toward Rebecca that she believed everything she said.

Catherine had been by her mother's side since young. Did Sally not know her character?

No one had comforted Catherine since yesterday. Everything that happened was treated as a matter of course.

She was only human.

As anger rushed through her body in a way that had never happened before, Catherine took two steps backward. "Fine. Since I'm so terrible, I'll leave, okay?"

She went to her room right after she finished speaking. She got a suitcase and subsequently stuffed her clothes into it.

Rebecca's voice came from the door. "Mom, Cathy's mad. We should talk her out of leaving."

"Leave her alone. That's just how she behaves. She has been pampered too much. She'll come back two days later. Let's go and buy you some clothes since you're going to get engaged soon."

"..."

Soon, the voices became faint.

With large teardrops falling on the back of her hand, Catherine carried her suitcase down the stairs. After that, she drove her car and left.

At that instant, it struck her that she seemed to have lost everything.

Why would everyone treat her this way when she did not do anything wrong?

She clutched the steering wheel as her eyes flashed with growing discontent.

After 40 minutes, Catherine saw a man's figure at the entrance of the registry office. The man looked smart dressed in a perfectly ironed white T-shirt and a pair of black trousers. He was tall and sturdy, giving off an aura of brilliance.

She rushed toward him after parking her car. "You actually came."

The woman's voice was filled with surprise and joy.

When Shaun turned around, he smelled the alcohol that lingered on her body from the night before. "Didn't you take a bath?"

Catherine felt embarrassed right away. "I drank too much last night, so I was already unconscious when I arrived home. I was in a hurry this morning, so..."

When she realized the man's increasingly disdainful gaze on her, she quickly swore, "Today was just an accident. I usually take a bath every day and I love to keep myself clean."

She observed his features as she spoke.

It was normal to find a man more attractive under the dim lighting of a pub. Nevertheless, one would notice that he was not that good-looking during the day.

Having said that, this man was an exception.

Not only was he not any less attractive, but he looked even more stunning with his elegant and cool features. He had a handsome face, and what was more, there were not any pores visible on his skin.

Catherine was aware that a few young women who were going into the registry office to get married were casting glances at him.

“What a handsome man.”

The man beside the woman said, “The girl looks pretty too.”

“That’s true. They match each other well. Their future children will probably be good-looking, unlike ours. How worrying...”

“...”

When the discussion reached Shaun’s ears, he said straight away, “We won’t have children.”

Catherine was at a loss for words.

Shaun said, “We’ll divorce three years later. I’ll give you a sum of money which will be enough for you to live the rest of your life. Also, I won’t meet your family. Think about it carefully. If you can’t go along with this deal, you can leave.”

Catherine felt like something was stuck in her heart.

She was under the impression that he loved her at first sight last night.

She did not mind him not loving her at first sight, though.

With her charisma, she believed that she could win the man's heart in three years' time.

She had to consolidate her identity as Ethan's aunt.

"Alright."

Once the two of them entered the registry office, they first went to take pictures together.

The cameraman, who had spent a long time taking pictures of them, was not satisfied with the outcome. "Can't you guys get close to each other and look sweet? Also, sir, please smile."

An impatient look crossed Shaun's face. Catherine immediately hooked her arm around his, then said with a smile, "His facial nerves have been damaged, so he's suffering from facial paralysis. Don't force him anymore. Just let him be."

"..."

Deeply insulted, Shaun shot an icy glare at the woman who was wearing a cheery smile.

"You'd better stop talking if you want to stop taking pictures," Catherine whispered in his ear boldly while standing on tiptoes. Her scent lingered on his ear, tickling him.

Chapter 5

Shaun froze and remained silent.

The cameraman was inwardly sympathetic toward him. It was a pity that a good-looking man like him was suffering from facial paralysis.

After Shaun and Catherine were done taking pictures, they headed to the first floor to register their marriage.

It was only when Shaun took out his citizenship certificate that Catherine finally learned his real name—Shaun Hill.

However, Ethan's mother's surname was Lyons. In that case, his uncle's surname was supposed to be Lyons as well.

In a daze, Catherine asked, "Why is your surname Hill?"

"Uh-huh."

As Shaun was lowering his head to sign the documents, he did not bother to know what she meant. He casually answered, "I adopted my mom's surname."

"Oh." Catherine finally understood. She had been filled with fear earlier, thinking that it was a case of mistaken identity.

She flirted with him for the very reason that he was Ethan's uncle.

However, she felt that something was somehow not right.

Ten minutes later, the marriage certificates were issued.

Catherine felt a twinge of sadness but found this to be incredible at the same time.

Since young, she had always assumed she would marry Ethan. Against her expectations, she married a man whom she had only met once.

“Here’s my contact number. I have something to attend to, so I’ll be leaving first.” Shaun jotted his number on a piece of blank paper for her before he left.

“Wait a minute...” Catherine stopped him the moment she came back to her senses. “Now that we’re a married couple, we should live together.”

With a dull expression, he replied, “I don’t enjoy living with someone else.”

“I’m your legal wife, not someone else. Even if we’re going to divorce three years later, we should still live together.”

Shaking the marriage certificate in her hand, Catherine pouted in an attempt to gain his sympathy. “I’m really miserable. Ever since my long-lost sister returned, my parents have been treating me with contempt. Now that I’ve been kicked out of the house, I don’t have a place to stay.”

“You can go and rent a place.”

Shaun walked away with indifference.

“Don’t abandon me, hubby!” Catherine suddenly let out a howl, hooking her arm around his. “I’m left with nothing but you right now.”

Her increasingly loud voice had attracted a lot of sidelong glances in the registry office.

Pulling a long face, Shaun regretted getting married to her at random.

“Fine. I live in Jadeite Bay. Go there on your own.”

Shaun could not help but stomp out of the registry office. He then warned her softly, “You’ll sleep in the guest room. You’re not allowed to step into my room.”

Secretly elated, Catherine believed that he would be the one begging her to enter his room in the future.

“By the way, don’t disturb Fudge.”

“Fudge?” Catherine gasped. “You already have a son?”

Shaun raised his eyebrows. “Take good care of him.”

Once he finished his sentence, he left straight away.

Catherine was so shocked that he forgot to go after Shaun. Although she had braced herself to marry someone she did not love, she was not at all ready to be someone’s stepmother.

She stood at the roadside for half an hour, picturing her conflicting future identities—namely as a stepmother and aunt.

At last, she dashed into the mall to buy children's toys after glancing at Ethan's disgusting photo.

A person named Fudge had to be a boy. After selecting several types of toy cars and Lego sets, she drove to Jadeite Bay.

Carrying a variety of things, she took a deep breath in front of the door. She punched in the password and the door was opened.

A friendly smile spread across her face. "Hi, Fudge—"

"Meow!"

A fat cat with a white body and light yellow ears was seen lying on the couch lazily. It produced a cute sound in the quiet living room.

"..."

Catherine blinked. "Fudge?"

"Meowww!"

After the fat cat stretched its body, it jumped down the couch and walked toward her legs to smell the toys that she was carrying. Uninterested, the cat returned to the couch and lay on it in an arrogant manner.

Chapter 6

Catherine was speechless.

Shaun should have explained this earlier.

She had spent the past few hours worrying about being a stepmother!

A feeling of helplessness washed over her.

Despite that, the chubby cat with clean fur was adorable.

She stepped forward, intending to pinch its fat cheeks, but the cat dashed into the master bedroom at the speed of lightning. The master bedroom was a place she was not yet qualified to step foot in.

Catherine let out a sigh at the rejection. Then, she scanned around the house that had three bedrooms and two living areas.

There was a master bedroom, a guest room, and a study.

The interior of the house was decorated in a minimalist, modern style using black, white, and gray as its main color scheme. It was pleasant to the eyes but gave out a cold and cheerless vibe at the same time. The renovation probably did not cost much.

Was this really the residence of Ethan's uncle?

The man was supposed to be a successful entrepreneur. It was one thing if he chose not to live in a grand villa, but there was no sign of luxury in this place at all.

Not to mention the shelves in the study room were filled with books like *The Science of Law*, *The Law Society Gazette*, and *Are We Slaves to Our Genes?*

Something did not feel right. Could it be possible that this man was not Ethan's uncle?

No, that would be impossible!

Freya could be quite careless at times, but for something as serious as this...

She could not possibly have made a mistake, right?

The overthinking was killing Catherine. She retrieved her phone to ring her friend. "Are you sure that he's Ethan's uncle?"

"Of course, I heard it from my brother. He even had a meal with that man before."

Relieved, Catherine placed a hand on her chest. "I was afraid that I married the wrong man."

"Oh my God, did you actually marry him?" A shriek of surprise sounded over the phone. "He really showed up?"

"Uh-huh," she replied. On the other side of the phone, Freya's eyes were welled up with tears. "We promised to be each other's angels. How could you abandon me in the blink of an eye?"

The words were stuck in Catherine's throat.

"Well, the two of you should treat me to dinner at the very least."

"Um... Nothing has really happened between us yet." Catherine summoned up the courage to explain her exchange with the man.

“You’ve got such a pretty face but love hasn’t been easy for you.” Freya showed her sympathy. “But don’t worry, I’m sure he’ll surrender to your sugar-coated bullets in no time.”

“I believe so.”

After the phone call ended, Catherine dropped by the nearby supermarket. The new house was too cold and empty to be called a home. It definitely needed a new makeover.

...

4:00 p.m. at Jennings Solicitors.

Shaun had just flipped open the document file when Chase Harrison stepped foot in his office.

“Congratulations! Should we have dinner with your new wife tonight?”

“It’s not like you don’t know the real reason why I got married,” Shaun replied coolly without lifting his head, his eyes glued to the words on the documents.

“You truly are fickle. I heard that Catherine Jones is quite a beauty. Aren’t you at least a little bit interested?”

Chase was filled with excitement. He lowered himself on the swivel office chair as he studied his friend’s expression with curious eyes.

Shaun paused what he was doing for a split second. He recalled the woman’s smooth, milky skin and her face that was as beautiful as a blooming flower. However, her shameless behavior...

He replied several seconds later, "I've seen countless attractive women."

"Fair point. An insignificant young lady from Melbourne wouldn't stand a chance to be your wife if you weren't trying to avoid an arranged marriage set up by the elders of your family. Indeed, she's not a good match for your grand status."

Chase let out a meaningful sigh. "So, the famous undefeatable legend has returned. How are you adapting to working in a small place like Melbourne?"

"It's certainly an experience to live like the poor."

"Tsk." Chase hissed. "The world is so unfair. We graduated at the same time but you've already climbed to the top of the ladder."

"It all comes down to the structure of our brains," Shaun replied, lifting his indifferent gaze.

Chase gritted his teeth at the humiliation. "Forget it, I'll leave this as is. Do me a favor, let's have dinner with several other solicitors of the company tonight."

"Hmm," Shaun replied. His phone then beeped with a notification sound.

He picked up his phone to see an incoming text from someone named 'Shaunerine'.

[Hubby, this is Cathy.]

Chapter 7

Shaun did not know what to reply. He massaged the space between his eyebrows and accepted the message request.

[Hubby, will you be home for dinner?] Catherine sent another text within seconds.

Shaun: [No. Don't call me that.]

Shaunerine: [Fine then, I'll call you Shaunny. It's a cute name.]

He did not know what else to say.

Was it too late to back out of the marriage arrangement?

Later that night.

The group of people was enjoying dinner in the interestingly designed courtyard-style restaurant.

The bunch of lawyers exchanged their opinions on the new cases recently taken in by the law firm.

Shaun listened absent-mindedly when he heard a notification alert on his phone again.

Catherine sent him a picture. Under the illumination of the soft yellow lights, the chubby cat was indulging itself in a small treat of dried fish.

Shaunerine: [Shaunny, don't worry about us. I'm taking such good care of little Fudge.]

Shaun sighed grudgingly. The greedy cat had been bribed effortlessly.

The time was 9.30 p.m.

The passcode entered unlocked the door. Shaun was evidently stunned the second he set foot into the house.

It appeared that his house had undergone a complete makeover. The black couch was decorated with peacock blue cushions. The white dining table was covered in a green table cloth with a wave pattern. A glass vase filled with pink hydrangeas sat quietly above it.

The entire house was decorated with green plants and fresh flowers. There were also several hanging baskets out on the balcony.

Was this still his house?

Did he enter the right place?

“Shaunny, you’re home.”

Catherine walked out of the guestroom wearing a long sleeve silk sleeping gown. Several white bunnies were printed on the wine red material of the gown.

Her thick and long brunette hair that was the color of milk tea was draped over her shoulders. Beneath the hem of her gown were her fair, slender legs.

She looked like a seductive vixen.

Shaun’s eyes darkened. “Who allowed you to dress like that around here?” The brows on his forehead twitched into a frown as he said sternly.

“Like what?” The woman swirled innocently. “My boobs and butt are well covered. Only my knees and calves are showing. All the young girls go out in the streets dressed like this. What’s wrong about it?”

He did not know where to look. Indeed, she was not wearing revealing clothes, but she was also not wearing anything underneath the nightwear.

The man averted his gaze. “I agreed to let you move in, but I didn’t give you permission to do this to my house.”

“Isn’t this better? It was too empty before that it didn’t even feel cozy like a home should.” Catherine showed him her palm. A hint of flirtatiousness was detected in her tone. “Look, I even have a few cuts on my palm from moving the plants around.”

He lowered his gaze to have a look. Indeed, there were a few tiny cuts on the tender skin of her delicate palm.

“You deserve it.”

He uttered softly before retreating to his room.

Annoyed, she pulled a face at his departing silhouette.

This man did not show any care for women at all. She would not be trying so hard to please the cold man if not for the plan to become her ex’s aunt.

7:00 a.m. the following day.

Shaun's biological clock woke him up early every morning at the same time. He bumped into the woman who was brushing her teeth in the bathroom.

"Good morning, Shaunny. Are you going for a morning run?" Catherine's eyes landed on his sportswear. The basic black outfit felt like a classic style on the man as if he was the spokesperson for the brand.

The man had a bad temper, but his impeccable appearance was undeniable.

Besides, the habit of going out for morning runs showed that he was a man of discipline.

"Yeah."

Shaun was a little surprised.

Young women at her age were not normally early risers.

"Well, don't get breakfast before you come home. I'll prepare something for you," she spoke like a proper housewife, "It's more hygienic than store-bought food."

He frowned. "No need for that. When are you planning to move?"

Her pretty face froze for a split second. "Although we're married, I don't want to get too involved with you. Don't waste your time on me because I'm not interested in you at all," he replied.

Then, he left the house.

Catherine pulled at her hair slightly as tears immediately welled up in her eyes.

She stood there motionless in the living room for a brief moment. Quickly, she collected herself and started making breakfast.

The man returned after jogging around the park. A delicious smell came from the kitchen, making him hungry in an instant.

“I made breakfast. There are churros and cinnamon rolls...”

She poked her head out from behind the kitchen door while wearing a light green apron that was dotted with little daisies.

“I don’t like sweet things for breakfast.”

He refused coldly. The straightforward remark he made earlier this morning was meant to drive her out of the house. Unexpectedly, she stayed behind and even made him breakfast.

Would the food she made be edible?

At first glance, she looked like a pretty spoiled young lady who had never done a single chore in her life.

He was accustomed to seeing women like her.

Shaun retrieved a carton of fresh milk from the fridge.

Catherine pouted.

It appeared he was determined not to try the food she made.

What a pretentious man.

Regardless, she had no problem enjoying the food herself.

She returned to the kitchen to continue making churros.

He appeared a few seconds later to warm up the milk. From the corners of his eyes, he noticed the woman shaping the dough into several long sticks in a practiced manner before placing them into the hot oil. Within seconds, golden logs floated to the top of the oil. They released a delicious smell that attacked his nostrils.

A hint of light flashed across his eyes.

This skill must have been acquired from years of practice.

He shifted his gaze downward. Beautiful cinnamon rolls with chocolate swirls were baking in the hot oven.

Her cheeks were tinted with a rosy pink because of the heat in the kitchen. Her skin was unquestionably beautiful. She did not have the defined sharp jawline that was favored by most social media influencers nowadays. Her slightly chubby cheeks made her appear youthful and adorable.

Catherine noticed him staring and playfully picked up a churro, waving it in front of his eyes. "Shaunny, are you sure you don't want a taste of this?"

“Not interested.”

He averted his gaze and placed the milk inside the microwave. Then, as if out of habit, he placed a piece of bacon between two slices of toast and shoved in a handful of lettuce. He started munching on the sandwich by the dining table.

The sandwich in his mouth suddenly tasted bland when he thought of the golden brown churros.

Frustrated, he covered one side of the toast with a thick layer of fruit jam.

Right then, the woman reappeared from the kitchen and placed a whole feast in front of his eyes. Churros, cinnamon rolls, pancakes, a cup of hot chocolate...

Shaun twitched his brows into a deep frown as she blinked innocently. “Shaunny, you don’t mind me eating here, do you?”

He watched on silently as she began the show.

Her performance was better than he expected. “Please forgive me for having a sweet tooth. I really can’t endure having to start the day with a bowl of boring cereal or a plain sandwich. It would be a huge disappointment for my tastebuds.”

Then, she took a massive bite of the churros. She closed her eyes as a look of satisfaction washed over her face.

“The flavor just bursts in your mouth. Mhmm, it’s so delicious.”

He remained silent.

What a waste of talent that this woman did not pursue an acting career. How could he still eat his plain sandwich now?

Chapter 8

“It’s a must to enjoy warm pancakes with high-quality butter. Then, a sip of hot chocolate to go down with it.”

Catherine continued on with the eating show.

She was savoring every bite of food in earnest. Taking her pretty face into account as well, her performance was way more entertaining and convincing than the other eating broadcast shows available.

Shaun could not take any more of this.

“Meow.” At the same time, Fudge leaped onto the dining table while wagging its tail.

Thinking the cat must be hungry, he walked over to the cupboard. He returned with a plate of cat food and placed it before Fudge.

Fudge sniffed it for a few seconds before turning its head away. It looked at Catherine with greedy eyes.

An awkward expression flashed across the man’s face.

She suppressed the desire to laugh before feeding the cat a small piece of the cinnamon roll. The little cat devoured it within seconds.

“Good kitty.”

She patted the cat on the head lovingly. ‘You have much better taste than your owner,’ she thought to herself.

Shaun felt embarrassed. After the cat ate two more bites of the cinnamon roll, it went on to enjoy the churros. This put a frown on the man’s forehead.

“You...”

Catherine seized the opportunity and shoved a piece of churros into his mouth.

A hint of anger flashed across his eyes. Just when he was about to spit it out, the crispy outside of the churros that were coated with cinnamon sugar melted on his tongue.

Instinctively, he began chewing on the dense dough. It was crispy on the outside but soft on the inside. It was delicious.

Surely, he had had churros before. The cooks from Hill household could make numerous kinds of food, but nothing tasted as good as this.

For some reason, the churros that she made brought out the creamy flavor of the milk without making it sickly.

“Is it nice?” Catherine asked, cupping her chin with both hands. She was confident in her cooking.

The light went out of his eyes when he noticed the smug smile on her face.

“It’s just alright.”

Then, he picked up another piece of churros and continued eating. The small bite from earlier was not enough for him to taste its full flavor properly.

She winked playfully. “Didn't you say it’s just alright?”

“Surely you can’t finish all these. I don’t like wasting food,” the man replied calmly.

She parted her lips to retaliate, but he interrupted with a frown, “Keep quiet during meal times.”

“...”

Catherine gasped in astonishment as she had never seen anyone so shameless.

He had said coolly that he did not like having sweet foods for breakfast, but he was now devouring the churros, pancakes, and cinnamon rolls—the hot chocolate too.

He sure had the cheek!

Initially, Shaun only wanted to have a little taste of the food, but everything that she made was exceptionally delicious. They were even better than the ones he tried in restaurants.

It was definitely out of his expectation that this woman could make such a scrumptious breakfast.

His impression of her changed a little. Coincidentally, she turned her face toward him and their eyes

met. "Shaunny, what do you want to eat for dinner? I'll make it for you," she said gently.

"I have a dinner appointment tonight."

Then, he left to get changed in the bedroom without another word.

This did not annoy her. It was not unusual for the boss of a multinational business to be occupied with work.

However, it was still important to maintain a good relationship between them.

She cleaned up the table immediately and hurried off to get changed into work clothes too.

When Shaun was about to leave the house, she quickly reappeared from her room with her purse.

"Shaunny, can you give me a lift? I'm heading off to work as well. If it's too much trouble, you can just drop me off at the subway station. Please."

He pursed his lips while thinking of refusing. However, he eventually nodded upon considering that he had enjoyed the breakfast she made today a lot.

The two of them took the elevator to the parking lot.

Catherine thought she would be getting into a Bentley or a Maybach, but when the man stopped by the side of a white Lexus...

"Um... Is this your car?"

“Yup.”

He opened the door and sat down in the driver’s seat.

Confused, she followed suit and entered the car. “Shaunny, why did you choose this car?”

This man was supposed to be the heir of a multinational business, yet he was driving a car that was worth only a little over 300,000 dollars?

“It’s cheap and fuel-efficient,” he simply replied while igniting the car.

“You do know the best way to live, my exceptional husband.”

She turned her head aside to find a packet of cheap tissue on the dashboard. Its packaging read ‘### Gas Station—cheapest and easiest.’

“...”

Catherine was confused.

Did all successful bosses nowadays live frugally like this?

Could it be possible that she was not treated well by the Jones because she had been spending lavishly instead of saving up like other successful bosses?

She fell into deep thought as she pondered over this.

Ten minutes later, the car came to a halt by the subway station. He turned to face her. "Off you go."

"..."

She was speechless.

She only said that out of politeness but he really did as told.

Well, well, well.

While suppressing the anger rising inside her, she forced a shy smile on her face. "Thanks, Shaunny."

The second she stepped out of the vehicle, the car sped away before she could say something else.

What an annoying and cruel man!

...

She only arrived at the company around 9:00 p.m.

Since returning from her studies abroad, she had been working at Summit Building Design Group. It was the Jones family's biggest corporation.

However, as soon as she stepped foot into the building, the project manager, James Lennon, said to her in a strange voice, "You don't have to show up starting from today. This project doesn't belong to you anymore."

“What do you mean?”

James’ eyes sparkled when he spotted someone behind her. “Rebecca, here you are.”

Catherine snapped her head around and saw Rebecca approaching their direction wearing a low-cut knitted white top. On her right was Ethan who was wearing a shirt of the same color. Their arms were linked together.

The sunlight that streamed into the room through the window enveloped the two of them. They looked like a blissful couple in their matching outfits.

Chapter 9

Catherine felt as if someone had punched her in the chest. The intense pain was suffocating, especially when Ethan’s indifferent gaze swept past her without lingering for a second longer.

James hurried toward Rebecca. “HQ has given the order to hand this project over to Rebecca.”

A shudder passed through Catherine before she turned to face the other woman.

“Cathy, don’t get upset.” Rebecca staggered backward as if she was utterly shocked. Fortunately, Ethan had his hand on the small of her back.

This scene only aggravated the situation.

“Rebecca, what more do you want? You’ve already stolen my man and now you’re trying to snatch away the project that I spent so much time and effort on. Are you really that envious of everything I have?”

“How ridiculous! Since when was Young Master Lowe your man?” James scoffed. “You’re quite something, aren’t you? You’ve been pestering Young Master Lowe in the past, but he hasn’t shown any interest in you at all. Besides, do you think you could’ve gotten the project if Young Master Lowe hadn’t pulled some strings with the boss of the said company?”

“James, that’s enough.” Rebecca signaled the man.

“I insist. You’re the fiancée of Young Master Lowe, so it’s only right you take on the project.”

“Do you think so too?” Catherine stared at Ethan who had been keeping quiet all this while.

As a matter of fact, Ethan did pull some strings to introduce her to Young Master Clark.

However, the two men were not particularly close either. It was Catherine who took the time to meet up with Young Master Clark throughout the entire month so that they could discuss the plans over and over again before finalizing the terms.

Ethan frowned slightly. “Young Master Clark did agree to meet you because of me.”

James sneered, “Everyone knows this, but someone just insists on humiliating herself.”

“I don’t believe this. I’m going to Dad.”

Catherine drove to the office to look for Jeffery Jones.

“Dad, why did you hand over the hotel project to Rebecca? You know that I’ve spent a lot of effort on this particular project.”

Jeffery, who was in the middle of work, was displeased at the woman who had barged in out of the blue. "I'll assign another project to you. What about the Campbell villa project?"

"This small-scale project is more appropriate for Rebecca. She's inexperienced in this industry, so it's better if she starts from the bottom..."

Jeffrey slammed his palm on the table. "She's your elder sister and you should show her some respect. No wonder your mom has been saying you're getting out of hand."

Catherine was startled. Her voice was full of grievances when she spoke next. "She stole my boyfriend and now she's stealing my project too. How can I possibly show my respect to that woman?"

"She didn't steal your project as every project belongs to Summit. I'm the president, and I can assign any project to anyone as per my wish. Besides, Ethan was never yours. He chose your elder sister."

Words escaped her lips before she could stop herself. "Ethan wouldn't have chosen Rebecca if you didn't transfer 80 percent of the company's shares to her."

"Your sister has suffered unthinkable pain throughout the years. Give her your assistance whenever you can. Also, apologize to her for what happened yesterday," the man said.

"I can't do that," she replied through gritted teeth.

Jeffery slammed on the table once more. "Leave if you can't do that, you ungrateful brat. You're nothing without Summit!"

His angry words slapped her across her face like a gust of brutal wind. Her cheeks reddened with mixed emotions.

“Fine, I’ll leave. I don’t believe a highly qualified designer like me with a first-class architect certification can’t find a job somewhere else.”

She returned to her own office after that. With a heart full of grievances and anger, she packed up her belongings into a cardboard box before heading to the entrance.

Numerous people murmured as she walked past.

“I heard she was fired by the president because she was mean toward First Young Lady!”

“How petty she must be to push aside her own sister. It’s rumored that First Young Lady was abducted when she was young and it’s only recently that they reunited. She must’ve suffered unimaginable pain during those years.”

“Exactly! Besides, First Young Lady isn’t only nice but easy-going too. She even bought us dinner for working overtime last night.”

“This woman is getting what she deserves!”

Chapter 10

Catherine forced out a self-deprecating smile.

Ever since joining the company, not once had she pulled rank. She always worked with much caution and conscientiousness.

She would be the last one to leave the office every day, working overtime and treating everyone else with respect at all times. It was unexpected that things would end up like this.

After leaving the company, she walked around the area alone without a specific destination in mind.

During that time, Ethan called her a few times but she refused to answer his calls.

She headed back to Jadeite Bay after buying some snacks and ingredients from the supermarket.

As soon as she stepped foot into the house, Fudge came forward to greet her while wagging its tail in the air.

She patted the cat on its head and murmured, "Fudge, you're the only one left that likes me now."

"Meow," the cat replied. It closed its eyes in satisfaction, giving the woman full permission to stroke it.

The corners of her lips twitched into a smile. "I bet you want some dried fish snacks, don't you? I'll get you some."

Shaun was not home even in the afternoon. Both the woman and the cat enjoyed a simple lunch. Then, she threw herself onto the couch and began searching for work on her laptop.

10 p.m. at night, Shaun returned to a brightly-lit living room.

Over on the couch, Catherine was in the middle of feeding Fudge a small piece of chip.

"Is this the kind of trash you feed my cat when I'm not home?"

His handsome features coldly scanned the table full of snacks. There were bags of chips, spicy fries, cheese, chocolate biscuits...

A tiny smear of chocolate was even found on Fudge's whiskers.

"I just fed Fudge a tiny bit. A real tiny bit." She gestured with her thumb and index finger, showing just how little it was. "Fudge keeps pestering me to give her some, so I had no choice but—"

"What does a cat know? Shouldn't an adult human like you know better?" Annoyed, he swept everything on the table into the trash can. "Don't eat trash like these in the house anymore. I don't like the smell."

Catherine looked at the snacks inside the trash can with a grimace. Oh God, she could not fathom how a person could actually be disgusted by the smell of snacks.

What a weirdo!

Nonetheless, reality forced her to twitch her lips into a flattering smile. "You're right, Shaunny. These are trash. I'll listen to you and stop eating them."

"Take a look at yourself in the mirror and see how pretentious you are."

The man could not be bothered. He picked the cat up and retreated to his bedroom.

"Shaunny, you had a long day. Are you hungry? Should I cook something for you? I make really delicious pasta."

She shamelessly followed after him in tiny steps.

He paused in his tracks. The food served in the restaurant he went to earlier for the business meeting

was so spicy that he barely ate any. His stomach grumbled a little upon hearing her suggestion.

She seized the man's brief hesitation and offered right away, saying, "I'll make some pasta right now. Go on and have your shower."

He looked over his shoulder to throw her a quick glance. The soft orange light shining on her from the top made her appear lovelier and warmer than usual.

15 minutes later, Catherine showed up by the door of the master bedroom holding a bowl of pasta.

She knocked on the door, but there was no reply.

Left with no better choice, she opened the door slightly. "Shaunny, the food's ready."

There was no one in the room. A faint outline of the man's silhouette could be seen on the frosted glass of the shower.

Dazed by the sight, she could not help imagining how the man would look without clothes on.

Both her cheeks reddened at the creation of her imagination.

Ah, hold on, she should not be thinking about this.

Just when she was about to turn around and leave, the frosted glass door was pushed open.

Shaun stepped out of it, undressed. However, there was a towel that was casually tied around his waist. His hair, still damp from the shower, sent droplets of water trickling down his chiseled jaw, all

the way down to his chest.

Her gaze slowly moved downward, following the motion of the water droplets. She gasped.

It was anticipated that he had a nice build, but she did not expect his body to be this good.

He had the perfect wheatish skin tone, not to mention the toned muscles that made up his body. The man was not exaggeratedly muscular like a bodybuilder, but every part of his body was defined.

The fit body exuded a manly charm that only a matured man possessed. She lowered her gaze further and noticed his perfectly toned waist.

“Have you seen enough?”

The man’s husky voice suddenly rang in her ears.

Catherine gathered herself instantly. She could feel the heat burning in her cheeks.

She pretty much grew up seeing Ethan’s impeccable handsome face. How could she let herself be carried away after just looking at another man?

Useless.

“I... I’m here to deliver your food. Hurry up and eat it or the pasta is going to clump together soon.”

She put the bowl away immediately. Just when she was leaving the room, she walked on the edge of the mat and tripped. She lost her balance and fell forward.

In the span of that few seconds, she thought she had grabbed hold of something but still fell face down to the ground nonetheless.

Fortunately, she landed on the mat, so it did not hurt too much.

When she opened her eyes again, the first thing that entered her sight was the man's long legs and...

Chapter 11

"Ah, why did you drop the towel?!"

Catherine was completely stupefied as it was the first time she encountered this kind of situation. She reached out to cover her eyes and that was when she realized the white towel was in her hand.

Did she... Did she accidentally pull the towel off him earlier?

"The towel came off?"

Shaun's indifferent voice swept past her cheeks like cold ice. "I've never seen a woman as shameless as you."

She felt like crying, but no tears came out. "I didn't plan to do so. I accidentally tripped on the mat."

"I've been walking on this mat every single day but I've not tripped before. Not once. You can't convince me with this ridiculous excuse." The man did not believe her at all.

She blinked blankly. The situation was beyond mending now, so she replied innocently, "Perhaps after having a glimpse of your god-like and impeccably perfect body, my mind went blank and I lost my ability to focus..."

The man scoffed out of anger. He had encountered numerous women in his life, but not one was this brazen.

“So you’re shifting the blame onto me now?”

“No, not at all. It’s my fault, really, for I’ve not seen much of life...”

“Will you stop staring? Get out.” Shaun could not hear more of that. He felt the blood boiling in his veins and tried really hard to resist kicking her in the face.

“Yes, of course. I’ll leave right away.”

Catherine hurriedly rose to her feet and headed for the door.

“Stand right there!”

A frustrated voice shouted behind her. The man was fuming with rage and said between gritted teeth, “Give me my towel.”

She lowered her eyes to the towel she was clutching. She was so embarrassed that she wished there was a hole she could just crawl into.

“Here.”

She put on a bold face and shoved the towel into his hands.

“...”

He was speechless when he realized the direction she was looking in.

What an audacious woman!

Slam! Catherine slammed the door shut behind her, patting her chest while puffing.

She seemed to notice the tips of the man’s ears turning bright red before she left the room. Was he embarrassed?

It was quite adorable, to be honest.

However, after this incident, she dared not linger in the living room anymore and returned to her bedroom right away.

Nonetheless, her mind did not seem capable of recovering from the surprise.

She had no idea how much time had passed when someone suddenly knocked on the door.

The woman jumped up in fright. A couple of seconds later, she replied timidly, “Can we talk about this tomorrow? I’m sleepy.”

“Do you keep your lights on when you sleep?” Shaun’s deep voice entered through the gap beneath the door. “Don’t make me get the key.”

She scratched her head in frustration before opening the door.

The man who was standing by the door was dressed in his gray pajamas. The refreshing scent of his aftershave smelled pleasant.

The buttons of his shirt were done all the way to the top, covering his Adam's apple. It was only autumn now, so it was not even that chilly.

"What are you looking at?"

Shaun became more furious upon sensing her gaze. This woman sure had the cheek!

Speechless, Catherine did not know what his piercing stare meant. "Nothing."

"You know better than anyone else."

He lowered his head to look at the woman. From this angle, her neck appeared slim and elegant. Perhaps it was the light or another reason, but her face seemed to be illuminated with a charming sunset glow.

His gaze moved down to the neckline of her cotton pajamas.

Right away, his eyes narrowed as he became more determined about his decision.

"Well, what are you looking at?"

She posed the same question.

The man's piercing stare was so intimidating that she, who was mentally prepared to seduce him, was having cold feet. She cast her gaze downward and immediately used her hands to cover her chest instinctively.

He scoffed. "I'm trying to see how you'll seduce me."

"..."

She was at a loss for words. Admittedly, she did have that thought before but not now.

"I wasn't..."

The woman pouted. Her makeup-free face looked naturally clean and fresh.

Shaun withdrew his gaze, and indifference instantly returned to the features on his handsome face. "I can give you the money to rent a place somewhere else. It's not appropriate for us to live in the same house.

He was chasing her out of the house.

Catherine became nervous upon hearing that. "How is it inappropriate? We're lawfully wedded."

A sarcastic smile spread across his face. "I think you know the real reason why we got married."

Upon hearing that, she attempted to put on her best seductive smile while trying to look shy at the same time. "Isn't it because I fell for you at first sight? Since that moment, my young heart has been deeply attached to you."

“...”

Speechless.

He must have been bewitched that night.

Out of the blue, she said, “I get it now. You must still be mad about the incident earlier. I know you feel as if you’ve been taken advantage of and it’s normal to think that way.”

She bit her pink lip, looking as if she was trying to make up her mind.

“Well... What about I show you what I have as well?”

Then, she reached out to undo the top button of her pajamas.

He subconsciously stopped breathing for a split second before he turned around and slammed the door shut, not forgetting to comment on her outrageously brazen behavior.

She heaved a sigh of relief as she looked at her collarbones. She found it quite funny that he had left before she could show anything.

Despite his bad temper, he was still a decent gentleman.

It was quite rare to meet a man like this nowadays.

...

Midnight. Catherine was woken up by the noise of the cat meowing incessantly.

She got out of bed and turned the lights on. Fudge was laying under the table, throwing up weakly.

“Fudge.” Startled, she reached out to get the cat, but Shaun’s indifferent voice rang behind her.

“Get out of the way.”

Her hands froze mid-air. He stepped forward to pick the cat up.

His chiseled jawline appeared indifferent and distant under the soft illumination of the lights. Nonetheless, beneath the messy black hair, somewhere deep within his pair of dark brown eyes was sparkling with an enchanting gentleness.”

“What happened to her?”

Catherine felt lost and helpless to see the adorable cat suffering.

“What do you think?” Shaun glared at her with rage in his eyes. “She’s a cat but you’ve been feeding her trash. Do you seriously think her stomach can handle it?”

She felt utterly remorseful. She had seen stray cats before that ate almost anything they could find on the streets. This was why she thought cats had a strong digestive system.

“I’m sorry.”

“I won’t let you off the hook if something bad happens to Fudge!”

He glared at her long and hard before rising to his feet and grabbing the car keys. He then hurried out of the house with Fudge in his arms.

She quickly followed him to the elevator. "I know a good veterinarian. Let me show you the way," she said anxiously.

He pursed his lips coldly without acknowledging her.

The elevator stopped at the parking lot and he stepped out of it in big strides.

When they got to the car, she had just opened the door to the passenger seat when a strong arm pulled her away forcefully from the back.

Catherine, who was wearing slippers, staggered backward. Being tipped off her balance, she fell backward and landed on the ground.

He stood in front of the car. She was frightened by the intense despise that exuded from his dark pupils. "Get out of here immediately. I don't wish to see you here by the time I come home. I won't ask politely again."

Then, Shaun carried Fudge into the car. The white Lexus sped off into the distance in no time.

Left alone in the dark parking lot, Catherine's eyes welled up with tears as she looked at the car driving off. The grievances that she had been holding back the entire day finally poured down her face like a broken dam.

Everyone had been giving her the cold shoulder today, keeping her at a distance.

She did not feel as if she belonged to the Jones household anymore.

Fudge was the only one left that was nice to her.

However, she could not even remain at this place any longer.

Her lips twitched into a sarcastic smile. Suddenly, the image of Fudge throwing up earlier popped into her mind and she felt deeply sorry.

Catherine knew Shaun was not interested in her, yet she persisted in pestering him anyway in order to achieve her own goal. She completely disregarded her own dignity. Was this really worth it?

She even put Fudge through this pain.

Perhaps it was time for her to leave.

Chapter 12

Catherine got up to her feet. She returned to the house to pack up her belongings and left.

2:00 a.m.

She did not want to disrupt her friend's sleep, so she drove to the nearest five-star hotel right away.

In the lobby, she retrieved her credit card and handed it to the receptionist. It was returned into her hands a few seconds later. "I'm sorry to inform you that this card can't be used."

Startled, she received it and gave the person another card.

However, she failed to make the payment even after several tries with her other cards.

It finally dawned upon her that the Joneses had suspended all of her credit cards.

Although she had earned a few million dollars in the past couple of years from working on several projects, she had handed over the money to Sally without keeping any for herself.

She normally used the credit cards given to her by Jeffery for her daily expenses, but those cards were all currently suspended. All she had left was a pay card that only had a little over 10,000 dollars.

The receptionist got impatient. "If you can't afford to stay in our hotel, there's a guesthouse about 300 yards away after taking a left turn by the main entrance."

She was offended. "Is this how you treat your customers?"

"I'm just being honest. You shouldn't come to a five-star hotel if you can't afford it."

Catherine was exasperated by now. She did not expect herself, a young lady from the affluent Jones household, to one day be subjected to such humiliation. "I can very well afford it, I..."

She retrieved her pay card but started to hesitate.

The cheapest room in this hotel was at least 2,000 dollars a night. Given the current situation, she really could not tell when she could return to the Jones household again.

She was now jobless and homeless. How could she survive in the future if she spent everything she had left?

“Alright, stop pretending. Leave. This is not somewhere you belong,” the receptionist said rudely.

Catherine swallowed her pride and left the hotel with her suitcase dragging behind her.

Many of the hotels did not have spare rooms at this hour of the night. She wandered around for a bit before checking into a budget hotel that charged around 100 dollars per night.

Without her knowledge, someone took a picture of her entering the cheap hotel and sent it to their high school group chat.

...

Shaun, who had arrived at the veterinary hospital, was personally greeted by the head veterinary surgeon.

He was waiting by the door with his lips tightly pursed.

The man was filled with regret as he pondered over his decision to marry a woman he knew nothing of.

15 minutes later, the door of the surgical room opened.

Out came Dr. Lewis. Shaun stepped forward immediately, his face all tensed up. “How’s the cat doing?”

Dr. Lewis readjusted his glasses before revealing a smile. “Your cat is two weeks pregnant.”

“...”

He was at a loss for words.

“Congratulations.” Dr. Lewis smiled. “For the new addition to your household.”

Shaun inhaled sharply as he suppressed his strong desire to lash out.

Two weeks?

That was before they moved to Melbourne. Some random male cat must have taken advantage of Fudge while they were still living in Canberra. He would undoubtedly punish the perpetrator if he managed to locate it.

“Um... You don't look pleased about the news. Should we get rid of them?”

Dr. Lewis, who had encountered numerous pet parents, had developed a strong sixth sense. “If that's the case, we can perform a spaying operation to remove the kittens, but it's rather cruel. I did an X-Ray on the cat earlier and she's carrying three kittens. It's good luck...”

Before he could finish his sentence, Dr. Lewis shuddered as he felt a deadly stare piercing through him. Immediately, he stopped speaking.

Shaun questioned in a deep voice, “Does a pregnant cat throw up like a human mother does?”

“It depends on each cat's condition,” the doctor explained with a smile, “Some people who don't know better will think the cat is having digestive problems.”

It was exactly what Shaun thought.

He even shifted the blame to Catherine. He seemed to recall pushing her to the ground before he left.

In other words, he had wronged her.

Frustrated, he massaged the area between his eyebrows. He wondered how that woman was doing right now.

Chapter 13

“Alright, I want to know more about the process. What’s the best way to keep her comfortable during pregnancy?” Shaun enquired.

For the next ten minutes, the vet explained the process in detail and gave him a cat pregnancy guide in the end. “A pregnant cat must watch its nutrition intake. Your cat is quite weak to begin with, thus miscarriage might happen easily. It’s best if you hire someone to look after it.”

“...”

Shaun was at a loss for words.

Was it a pet or a hardnut were they dealing with here?

For some reason, he was suddenly reminded of Catherine’s exceptional cooking skills. It occurred to him that he might have been too rude to her just now.

Right, he should probably stop bringing up the topic of her leaving the house when he returned later.

Back at Jadeite Bay, he opened the door and turned the lights on.

Something did not feel right.

The door of the guest room was open and there was no one in sight. He could not find a single garment of women's clothing in there.

Catherine had left.

His eyebrows twitched into a frown.

Fudge meowed lazily in his arms. She glanced around the room before lowering her head in disappointment.

The man was frustrated but thought that her departure might be for the best.

They should not get too involved in each other's life anyway.

He could make it up to her with a larger compensation on the day of their divorce.

As for Fudge, well, he could always hire a sitter.

...

10 a.m.

Catherine woke up from the couch feeling groggy.

After checking into the room last night, she discovered lots of hair on the bed. The bedsheets looked unwashed at first glance. She was a clean freak, thus she ended up falling asleep on the couch instead.

Freya rang when she was about to freshen up.

“Babe, aren’t you living with your husband? How did you end up in a budget hotel?”

“How do you know about this?”

“Come on, everyone is talking about it on the group chat.” There was a hint of frustration in her voice. “That mean woman, Janet Campbell, even brought up your past. She told everyone that you’ve been chased out of the Jones household because your elder sister is back. All those hypocrites who were envious of your status as the young lady are now mocking you relentlessly.”

“Oh,” she mumbled.

Janet Campbell was a daughter from another affluent household in Melbourne. The two of them used to be classmates in school.

However, Janet had always been jealous of Catherine for her beautiful looks and outstanding academic achievements, hence they had never been the closest of friends. It was not unusual for her to ruin Catherine’s reputation when the latter was already in a bad position.

“Aren’t you furious?” Freya asked, feeling annoyed. “What’s happening? You’ve never stepped foot into a hotel with less than five stars.”

“Things have changed. My dad has suspended all of my cards and I don’t have much on me. Last night,

Shaun chased me out of the house.”

“Why didn’t you come to me?”

“It was late and I didn’t want to wake you up.”

“Catherine, you’re such a fool. Tell me the address.”

40 minutes later, Freya showed up, looking as if she was in a haste.

She felt sorry for her friend after glancing around the small and dodgy room. There was even a stash of tart cards slipped through the door by prostitutes looking for business.

“Come on, leave this place right away and stay at mine.”

“No, you have a boyfriend. Plus, it’s not a good idea for the long term. I plan to rent a place.”

Catherine shook her head to refuse the kind offer.

After giving it some consideration, Freya agreed. “That’s not a bad idea. Ethan came to my place again last night looking for you. He’s seriously so annoying.”

Catherine felt her throat tightening up at the sound of this name.

There was a time when the man would back her up on everything. However, she felt utterly disheartened upon remembering what he said yesterday.

“He’s the last person I wish to see right now.”

“Me too.” Freya nodded, but soon, a confused expression washed over her face. “By the way, you’re now a married woman, so why did Shaun chase you out of the house in the middle of the night?”

Catherine forced out a bitter smile before briefly explaining what happened.

Freya felt deeply for her best friend. “He must be insane. You’re his other half by law. Are you less important to him than a cat?”

“That’s not at all surprising, is it?”

Freya hesitated. “Um... Well, it was your decision to marry him anyway.”

Catherine remained silent. She regretted her choice.

A sigh escaped Freya’s lips. “Right, let’s go get some food. I know a good place where the food reminds one of home. We can start looking for a house after taking care of our bellies. Oh, why don’t we invite Cindy Turner too?”

While on their way to the restaurant, Catherine called Cindy.

“Freya and I are heading out for a meal. It’s been a while since we last met. Do you want to tag along?”

“I’m in the middle of a photo shoot. Sorry.”

“It’s alright. Let’s do it some other time.”

“She’s becoming more famous each day. She wouldn’t be who she is today if you hadn’t written and composed for her back then,” Freya commented after the call ended.

“We’re still friends, after all. It’s normal that she’s busy.”

...

Grapefruit Restaurant was the up-and-coming restaurant that had recently opened in Melbourne. There was a spacious courtyard designed in the middle of the restaurant.

Luxurious cars were found outside of the restaurant. This was a place that only the really wealthy could afford.

The two of them parked the car and headed into the restaurant.

A few familiar faces entered their sight the minute they stepped foot into that place, including Rebecca, Janet, as well as...

“Cindy!” Freya called out to the woman.

Cindy, who was wearing sunglasses, revealed an awkward smile.

Annoyed, Freya approached the women with Catherine.

“You told us over the phone not long ago that you’re busy working on a photo shoot, yet here you are

with these women. Do you know who they are? Janet is Catherine's worst enemy and Rebecca is the two-faced fox who stole her boyfriend."

"Who are you calling two-faced? Watch your tone."

Janet stepped forward to push Freya rudely.

Catherine reached out to catch her friend as she glanced at the group of women with contempt.

She would not have come here if she knew this was going to happen. However, she could not deny that Cindy had truly disappointed her.

"Cindy, why are you hanging out with them? It's one thing with Rebecca, but you should know better than anyone about my history with Janet."

"Why?" Janet linked her arm with Cindy as a smug look spread across her face. "Do you really have to ask? Not only have you lost the right to the Jones family's inheritance, but you've also resorted to staying in a cheap budget hotel. A person like you doesn't deserve to be friends with Cindy. She's the most popular singer at the minute whereas you're only a phoenix that has fallen. You're a nobody."

Catherine narrowed her eyes at Cindy. "I want to hear it from your mouth."

Chapter 14

Cindy took off her sunglasses to throw a sarcastic glance at Catherine. "It's not a bad thing that you bumped into me today as I'm tired of turning you down with excuses as well. Honestly, it's your fault that you don't know where you stand. Must you make me spell things out for you before you finally get it?"

Catherine felt like a failure as she studied this beautifully made-up face in front of her eyes.

Both Ethan and Cindy only chose to be nice to her before this because she was next in line as the heir of the Jones family.

“Cindy, are you being serious?” Freya shouted, “Did you forget how you were bullied by Janet in the past? Or how Cathy helped you with the songs...”

“Stop trying to restrain me using the past. She and I aren’t from the same world,” Cindy cut her off nervously. “Freya, take my advice. Some people will only bring you down. It’s best to stay away from them.”

“Shut up! Friends are supposed to support each other without hoping to get something in return. Don’t you understand that?” The fury in Freya’s tone was unmistakable.

“Forget it, there’s no point arguing with them.” Catherine grabbed Freya’s arm, her face showing no emotion. “We’re here to have a meal. Let’s go.”

Freya glared murderously at the three women before being led away by Cindy.

“Cathy, has that woman lost her mind or what? You’ve been nothing but a great friend to her. Cindy wouldn’t be where she is today without your help. Has she forgotten how Janet used to bully her? I regret not realizing Cindy’s true colors before this.”

Catherine lowered her gaze to the ground. Her delicate and pretty face remained nonchalant.

“Cathy, aren’t you angry? Don’t you want to criticize her?”

“Of course I do, but what good would it do?” The corners of her lips twitched into a self-deprecating smile. There was a hint of sorrow that flashed across her eyes. “But this is the reality of things. Look, both my birth parents are completely disregarding me while Ethan, who basically grew up with me, has abandoned me. I’m jobless, homeless, and unloved. Cindy is not the only one treating me like

this.”

Freya looked at her friend, feeling both sorry and angry.

“My dad said it himself. My presence in Summit Group is solely to provide assistance to Rebecca. I can leave the company if I refuse to accept fate.”

A pitiful smile spread across her face. “Obviously, I didn’t want that, so I left.”

Freya tried to cheer her up. “Stop it. You’ll definitely shine brighter elsewhere with your capabilities.”

At the same time, a server approached them.

“Excuse me, miss, do you have a reservation?”

“Yes, I spoke with Manager Lorenz over the phone earlier.” Freya gestured to the manager standing by the reception.

Manager Lorenz walked toward them. “Miss Lynch, I’ve reserved a private room for you. Allow me to show you the way.”

At the same time, Janet’s voice rang behind them.

“Manager Lorenz, I’ve brought a couple of friends with me today. Do you have any private rooms left?”

The manager seemed surprised. His eyes sparkled when he noticed Cindy among the women. “Could

this possibly be the singer Cindy Turner?"

The latter smiled sweetly. "Manager Lorenz, you're certainly great with faces. I told Cindy that the food here is amazing. Her schedule is free tonight, so here we are," Janet said with a grin.

Manager Lorenz was overwhelmed by the situation. "Miss Turner has a wonderful voice and I'm a fan. It's a shame that we're fully booked tonight."

"Didn't you say that you reserved one for them?" Janet threw a glance at Catherine out of the corner of her eyes.

Freya was instantly filled with rage. "We reserved the room beforehand. Get yourself a booking if you want to dine here."

Manager Lorenz was at a loss of what to do. Both of them were young ladies from the affluent families of Melbourne. It would not be wise to offend either of them.

The corners of Janet's lips formed a faint smile as she pointed at Rebecca.

"Manager Lorenz, I don't have to tell you who Cindy is, but you probably have no idea about this lady over here. Her name is Rebecca Jones and her father is the president of Summit Building Design Group. She's soon to be the heir of the company. As for that friend of Miss Lynch, she's only but an unimportant assistant to Miss Jones over here."

This took the manager by surprise.

The Summit Group was among the top 300 successful companies within the country. It was a name that everyone in Melbourne was familiar with.

Besides, Janet also came from an affluent family. In comparison, Freya and her friend seemed to be on the weaker end.

Freya retaliated. "An unimportant assistant? That one over there is but a shameless thief who likes stealing things belonging to others."

There was a slight change on Rebecca's face. Janet stared at the man with a grin on her face. "Do we have a room now, Manager Lorenz?"

"Yes, absolutely."

Manager Lorenz decided within seconds. "Miss Lynch, I just remembered that I agreed to reserve a room for Miss Campbell before you... Um, please come again next time."

Catherine narrowed her eyes, fuming. "Manager Lorenz, do you take us as fools?"

Freya rolled up her sleeves. "Do you think you can bully me? One phone call to my elder brother right now and your restaurant will shut its door within seconds."

"Manager Lorenz, don't worry. We'll take full responsibility." Rebecca grinned.

The manager felt confident with the support. "Miss Lynch, I'm just an employee. You can't threaten me by pulling rank. Please leave right away and stop disrupting our customers."

"What if I don't? If I can't have my meal here, then no one else can too."

She picked up a vase within her reach and smashed it to the ground.

Emotions chased across the manager's face in quick succession. "Get them out of here," he instructed the servers nearby.

Before Catherine could react, both she and Freya were forcefully pushed out to the entrance by several strong men.

The servers were particularly rude to her. As she was wearing high heels, she lost her balance and fell to the ground.

In spite of that, the servers pretended not to notice and continued dragging her out of the restaurant before she could get to her feet.

Catherine felt as if she was nothing more than a sack. Her arms and knees did not feel like hers anymore.

"Let her go!"

A man's indifferent voice rang behind them.

Her heart skipped a beat.

Could it possibly be...

Chapter 15

Catherine lifted her head, but the server kicked her out of the restaurant before she could take a good look.

A tall and strong man suddenly approached with an aura of the warm sunlight. He appeared naturally elegant in his deep blue double-breasted blazer.

His facial features were unusually defined and good-looking. His dark deep-set eyes and thick long brows gave out an imposing manner.

Shaun Hill...

This took her by surprise. Little did she expect to bump into this man so soon.

Not to mention at a time when she was looking so battered and disheveled.

Oh no, he already disliked her to begin with. He would probably propose a divorce right after this.

Chase stepped forward from the back and instantly recognized Catherine.

He had seen the woman before in other banquets, not to mention she was one of the few publicly recognized beautiful women of Melbourne.

However, it was odd to see her in this distraught state.

A playful tease spread across his face. "Shaun, isn't this your..."

Chapter 16

Shaun suddenly curled a smile and raised his eyebrows. "You can leave, but you have to leave in the same way as they were dragged out just now."

Catherine was stunned as her eyes settled on Shaun. She was caught in a moment of contrasting emotions.

She did not expect him to stand up for her. Somehow, she could not help but find him rather attractive.

At that moment, Rebecca and the women could no longer keep their composure.

Janet roared, "Who do you think you are? Do you know who we are?"

Shaun kept still, throwing a glance at Chase.

Chase looked sideways at the group of servers with a smile. "Should I personally give your boss a call? The strongest person to drag them away will be rewarded."

Everyone in the restaurant was aware of Chase's identity. Even the servers' boss would treat him courteously.

The group of servers immediately rushed to drag Rebecca and the two other women out with one server treating them crueler than the previous one.

All of the three women had come

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